

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 170909Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1364
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
USMISSION NATO

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, MILI, FI
SUBJECT: GOF DENIES ALLEGED FINNISH MILITARY BUILDUP IN LAPLAND

1. SUMMARY. GOF MOVED FAST TO PUBLICLY REBUT REUTER ARTICLE ALLEGING IMPORTANT NEW FINNISH MILITARY BUILDUP IN LAPLAND. GOF ALSO "AMAZED" AT ARTICLE' SUGGESTION OF COOLING OF FINNISH/SOVIET RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. MINOR BUT REMARKABLE STIR WAS AROUSED IN FINLAND BY MAY 9 REUTER ARTICLE BY JAMES FOLEY (NATO CORRESPONDENT) DATED HELSINKI REPORTING NEW INCREASES IN FINLAND'S MILITARY STRENGTH IN LAPLAND AREA. ACCORDING TO FOLEY REPORT, FINNS PLAN TO TRIPLE THEIR TROOP LEVELS IN NORTHERN PART OF COUNTRY ALLEGEDLY BECAUSE OF FINNISH FEARS THAT LAPLAND WILL BE A "THEATER OF WAR," FEARS GENERATED BY BUILDUP OF SOVIET MILITARY STRENGTH IN KOLA PENINSULA AND INCREASE IN GERMAN TROOP PARTICIPATION IN NATO EXERCISES IN NORWAY. FOLEY SAID PLANS NOT DUE TO COOLING OF FINNISH-SOVIET
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RELATIONS, ALTHOUGH HE ENDED HIS ARTICLE BY SAYING RELATIONS HAVE IN FACT COOLED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF KOMMISSAROV/BARTENYEV BOOK ON 1948 FINNISH-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP, COOPERATION, AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE PACT.

3. GOF WAS QUICK TO ISSUE PUBLIC DENIALS OF FOLEY'S ALLEGATIONS. MFA EXPRESSED AMAZEMENT REGARDING ALLEGED

COOLING OF RELATIONS WITH USSR IN VIEW OF SATISFACTORY LANGUAGE OF COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWING KOSYGIN'S RECENT VISIT HERE. MFA ALSO DISPUTED FOLEY'S CONTENTION ABOUT RECENT CHANGES IN BALANCE OF FORCES IN NORTHERN AREAS.

4. MAJOR GENERAL PAJUNEN, CHIEF OF DEFENSE MINISTRY'S MILITARY AFFAIRS SECTION, DENIED PLANS TO TRIPLE NUMBER OF TROOPS. HE REFERRED TO 1976 REPORT OF SECOND PARLIAMENTARY DEFENSE COMMITTEE WHICH CALLED FOR TRANSITION OF LAPLAND JAEGER BATTALION TO BRIGADE, WHICH PRESS SAID WOULD CONSIST OF TWO WEAK BATTALIONS IN PLACE OF ONE STRONG ONE. OTHER DEFENSE MINISTRY SPOKESMEN POINTED OUT THAT COPY OF COMMITTEE REPORT HAD BEEN GIVEN TO FOLEY, WHO CITED IT IN HIS ARTICLE.

5. IN SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT FINNISH DEFENSE FORCES COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LAURI SUTELA, IN SPEECH MAY 10 TO HELSINKI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ON THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE REPORT, DISCUSSED AT LENGTH OF REPORT'S CONTENTS REGARDING BUILDUP ON KOLA PENINSULA, INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF FINNISH LAPLAND, AND COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEFENSE POLICY IN LIGHT OF THESE FACTORS. SUTELA REFERRED TO DECISIONS TO IMPROVE AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITY INCLUDING PURCHASE OF NEW SQUADRON OF MIG INTERCEPTERS, WHICH HE SAID MAY BE INCLUDED IN SOVIET TRADE AGREEMENT FOR 1976-80, AND POSSIBILITY OF PURCHASE OF SOVIET SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES. HE ALSO URGED PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMITTEE WHICH WOULD PERMIT INCREASED MILITARY READINESS IN A CRISIS OCCURRING IN PERIOD "BETWEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OPEN WAR AND STABLE PERIOD OF PEACE."

6. COMMENT: NONE OF ITEMS REPORTED BY FOLEY IS NEWS, AS PARLIAMENTARY DEFENSE COMMITTEE REPORT CLEARLY LAID OUT ANALYSIS OF LAPLAND SITUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEFENSE POLICY BASED THEREON. (EMBASSY'S DAO IR'S 6831006176, 6831003377 AND 6831003977 REPORTED FINNISH PLANS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF JAEGER BRIGADE AND PROCUREMENT OF NEW AIR DEFENSE EQUIPMENT AND FORWARDED ENGLISH VERSION OF COMMITTEE REPORT.) EXTENSIVE PRESS COVERAGE AND SWIFT PUBLIC REACTION BY GOF ILLUSTRATE CONTINUING CONCERN OF FINNS OVER NORDIC SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AND ESPECIALLY OVER PROBABLE SOVIET SENSITIVITIES TO ISSUE ON EVE OF PRESIDENT KEKKONEN'S VISIT TO MOSCOW.
HOUSTON

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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 17-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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